

The Darent Federation of Schools

Complaints Procedure



Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: April 2026
---------------------	----------------	------------------

Last reviewed on:	April 2025
--------------------------	------------

Next review due by:	April 2028
----------------------------	------------

Complaints Procedure

Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and Guidance.....	2
3. Definitions and Scope	3
4. Roles and Responsibilities	4
5. Principles for Investigation	4
6. Stages of Complaint.....	5
7. Complaints Against the Executive Headteacher, Governors or Governing Board	6
8. Referring Complaints Beyond the School.....	6
9. Persistent or Unreasonable Complaints.....	6
10. Record Keeping.....	7
11. Learning Lessons.....	7
12. Monitoring Arrangements.....	7
13. Links with Other Policies.....	7
Appendix 1 - Complaints Procedure Flowchart.....	8
Appendix 2 - Complaint Form - The Darent Federation	9
Appendix 3 - Complaints Panel Hearing Procedure	10
Appendix 4 - Example Outcome Letter (Panel Decision).....	11
Appendix 5 - Managing Serial or Unreasonable Complaints.....	12

1. Aims

The Darent Federation is committed to providing a high-quality education and a supportive environment for all pupils. We welcome feedback and recognise that concerns and complaints provide an opportunity to improve our practice.

We aim to ensure that:

- Concerns and complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and transparently
- Complaints are handled confidentially and sensitively
- All parties are treated with respect
- Complaints are resolved as quickly as possible
- Lessons are learned to improve the school's work.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This procedure meets the requirements of:

- Education Act 2002 (Section 29)
- DfE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR.

The governing board is responsible for ensuring the school has a published complaints procedure.

Complaints Procedure

3. Definitions and Scope

3.1 What is a complaint?

A complaint is:

An expression of dissatisfaction about the actions taken, or lack of action, by the school or governing body.

Complaints may relate to:

- Teaching and learning
- School organisation
- School policies
- Behaviour management
- Communication
- The welfare or safety of pupils.

Complaints may be made by:

- Parents or carers
- Members of the public
- Community members
- Visitors to the school.

3.2 What this procedure does NOT cover

Separate procedures exist for:

Issue	Procedure
School admissions	Admissions appeals process
Pupil exclusions	Statutory exclusions process
Safeguarding concerns	Child Protection policy
Staff grievances	Staff grievance procedure
Whistleblowing	Whistleblowing policy
SEND statutory assessment	Local authority SEND procedures
Data protection issues	Data protection / ICO procedures

Complaints Procedure

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Complainant

The complainant should:

- Explain the complaint clearly
- Provide relevant information
- Allow the school reasonable time to respond
- Treat staff respectfully.

4.2 Executive Headteacher

The Executive Headteacher will:

- Investigate complaints fairly
- Respond within agreed timescales
- Ensure appropriate records are kept
- Seek resolution wherever possible.

4.3 Governing Board

The governing board will:

- Ensure the complaints procedure is followed
- Appoint governors to a complaints panel when necessary
- Monitor complaints and learning outcomes.

4.4 Clerk to Governors

The clerk will:

- Arrange complaints panel meetings
- Distribute relevant documents
- Take notes at hearings
- Communicate panel decisions.

5. Principles for Investigation

When investigating complaints the school will ensure that:

- Complaints are handled impartially
- Investigations are thorough and evidence-based
- All parties have the opportunity to explain their views
- Information is kept confidential where appropriate
- The process is fair and proportionate.

Anonymous complaints will be considered at the discretion of the school.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for individuals with disabilities or additional communication needs.

Complaints Procedure

6. Stages of Complaint

(This applies to complaints not involving the Executive Headteacher or governors.)

Most concerns can be resolved informally and we encourage parents to discuss concerns with the relevant staff member first.

Stage 0: Informal Resolution

The complainant should initially raise their concern with:

- The class teacher, or
- A member of staff directly involved

Staff will aim to resolve the concern quickly.

If the issue is not resolved, the complainant may move to Stage 1.

Stage 1: Formal Complaint to the Executive Headteacher

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing to the Executive Headteacher.

The Executive Headteacher will:

1. Acknowledge the complaint within 5 school days
2. Investigate the complaint
3. Provide a written response within 10 school days where possible.

The response will include:

- Findings from the investigation
- Any actions taken
- The decision
- Information about escalation to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Complaint Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may request a governing board complaints panel.

The request must be made within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 1 response.

Panel Arrangements

The panel will consist of:

- At least 3 governors
- Governors with no prior involvement
- A clerk present.

The panel will:

- Review the complaint
- Hear from both parties
- Consider evidence
- Reach a decision.

Complaints Procedure

The panel may:

- Uphold the complaint
- Partially uphold the complaint
- Dismiss the complaint.

The panel decision is final within the school's procedure.

A written decision will normally be issued within 5 school days.

7. Complaints Against the Executive Headteacher, Governors or Governing Board

Complaint about the Executive Headteacher

Complaints about the Executive Headteacher should be sent to the Chair of Governors.

The Chair will investigate or appoint another governor to do so.

Complaint about the Chair of Governors

The complaint should be sent to the Clerk to the Governing Board, who will arrange investigation by another governor.

Complaint about the Governing Board

Complaints about the governing board will normally be handled by a panel of governors not involved in the issue.

8. Referring Complaints Beyond the School

If the complainant believes the school has not followed its complaints procedure properly, they may refer the matter to:

Department for Education

School Complaints Unit

The DfE will consider whether the procedure has been followed, not the outcome itself.

9. Persistent or Unreasonable Complaints

In rare cases a complainant may behave unreasonably.

Examples include:

- Repeatedly raising the same issue after resolution
- Abusive or aggressive communication
- Excessive contact.

The school may:

- Limit contact methods
- Require communication in writing only
- Refuse to reopen previously resolved complaints.

Any restrictions will be proportionate and reviewed regularly.

Complaints Procedure

10. Record Keeping

The school will keep records of:

- Complaints received
- Investigations conducted
- Outcomes reached.

Records will be stored securely in accordance with data protection legislation.

11. Learning Lessons

The school will review complaints to identify patterns and improve practice.

Lessons learned may inform:

- Staff training
- Policy development
- School improvement planning.

12. Monitoring Arrangements

The governing board will:

- Monitor complaints annually
- Review trends
- Ensure the procedure remains effective.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

13. Links with Other Policies

This procedure should be read alongside:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy.

Complaints Procedure

Appendix 1 - Complaints Procedure Flowchart

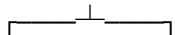
Concern or issue arises



Informal discussion with class teacher or relevant member of staff



| Concern resolved?



Yes



No



Matter

closed



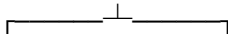
Stage 1

Formal complaint to Executive Headteacher (in writing)



Executive Headteacher investigates and responds within 10 school days where possible

| Complainant satisfied?



Yes



No



Matter

closed



Stage 2

Complaints Panel of Governing Board (request within 10 school days)



Panel hearing arranged with at least 3 governors



Written decision issued



School procedure ends



If complainant believes procedure was not followed correctly they may refer to the Department for Education School Complaints Unit

Complaints Procedure

Appendix 2 - Complaint Form - The Darent Federation

(Kemsing Primary School and Sundridge & Brasted CE Primary School)

Please complete and return to the school office or email to the Executive Headteacher.

Complainant Details

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Relationship to the school (e.g. parent/carer/community member):

Child's name (if relevant):

Child's class/year group:

Details of Complaint

Please describe the complaint as clearly as possible.

Include dates, times, and names of people involved if known.

What actions have you already taken?

Who did you speak to and what was the response?

What outcome are you seeking?

Please describe what you feel would resolve the issue.

Supporting Evidence

Please list any documents or evidence you are providing.

Signature:

Date:

Complaints Procedure

Appendix 3 - Complaints Panel Hearing Procedure

When a complaint reaches Stage 2, a panel of governors will hear the complaint.

Panel Composition

The panel will consist of:

- At least three governors
- Governors with no prior involvement
- A clerk to the governing board

Before the Hearing

The clerk will:

- Arrange the hearing date
- Circulate documentation
- Provide details of the procedure
- Confirm attendees

Both parties will receive all documentation at least five school days before the hearing.

The Hearing Process

The typical order of proceedings is:

1. The chair of the panel introduces everyone present.
2. The complainant explains their complaint.
3. Panel members may ask questions.
4. The Headteacher (or representative) explains the school's response.
5. Panel members may ask questions.
6. Both parties summarise their positions.
7. Both parties withdraw while the panel deliberates.

The Panel's Decision

The panel may decide to:

- Uphold the complaint
- Partially uphold the complaint
- Dismiss the complaint

The panel may also recommend actions such as:

- Apologies
- Policy review
- Staff training
- Changes to procedures

The decision will normally be sent in writing within five school days.

The panel decision represents the final stage of the school's complaints procedure.

Complaints Procedure

Appendix 4 - Example Outcome Letter (Panel Decision)

Dear [Name],

Thank you for attending the complaints panel hearing held on [date].

The panel carefully considered all the information presented and reached the following decision.

Decision

The panel has decided to:

[Uphold / Partially uphold / Dismiss] the complaint.

Reasons

The panel concluded that:

[Summary of findings]

Actions

The panel has recommended the following actions:

[Actions if applicable]

This concludes the school's complaints procedure.

If you believe the school has not followed its complaints procedure correctly, you may refer the matter to the Department for Education School Complaints Unit.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Complaints Panel

Complaints Procedure

Appendix 5 - Managing Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

In a small number of cases complainants may pursue complaints in a way that is unreasonable.

Examples include:

- Repeatedly raising the same complaint after it has been fully addressed
- Abusive or aggressive communication
- Excessive contact with staff

In such circumstances the school may:

- Limit the frequency of contact
- Require communication in writing
- Decline to reopen previously resolved complaints

Any restrictions will be proportionate and reviewed regularly.